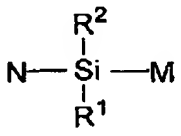
I. CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Original) A compound having the following formula (I):



(I)

wherein M comprises a mass marker, N comprises a nucleic acid, and wherein R^1 and R^2 are each independently selected from a hydrogen atom, a halogen atom, a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl group, and a substituted or unsubstituted aryl group such that when the compound reacts with an electron donating moiety, either N or M cleaves from the Si atom in preference to R^1 and R^2.

2. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The compound according to claim 1, wherein R^1 and R^2 are each independently selected from fluorine, chlorine, bromine, iodine, methyl, ethyl, propyl, isopropyl, butyl, isobutyl, tert-butyl, or phenyl groups.

3. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The compound according to ~~claim 1 or~~ claim 2, wherein N comprises a nucleotide or an oligonucleotide.

4. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The compound according to claim 3, wherein the nucleotide or oligonucleotide is a natural, or is modified by modifying a base, sugar and/or backbone of the nucleotide or oligonucleotide.

5. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The compound according to ~~any preceding claim~~ claim 4, wherein the mass marker comprises a polyether.

6. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The compound according to claim 5, wherein the polyether is a substituted or unsubstituted poly(arylether).

7. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The compound according to ~~claim 5 or~~ claim 6, wherein the polyether comprises one or more fluorine atom substituents.

8. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The compound according to ~~any preceding claim~~ claim 7, wherein the mass marker comprises a metal ion-binding moiety.

9. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The compound according to claim 8, wherein the metal ion-binding moiety is a porphyrin, a crown ether, hexahistidine, or a multidentate ligand.

10. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The compound according to claim 9, wherein the metal ion-binding moiety is a bidentate ligand or is EDTA.

11. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The compound according to ~~any of claims 8-10~~ claim 10, wherein the metal ion-binding moiety is bound to a monovalent, divalent or trivalent metal ion.

12. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The compound according to claim 11, wherein the metal ion is a transition metal ion, or a metal ion of group IA, IIA or IIIA of the periodic table.

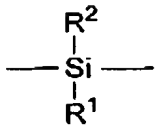
13. (Currently Amended) [[A]] [A] The compound according to claim 12, wherein the metal ion is Ni^{2+}, Li^{+}, Na^{+}, K^{+}, Mg^{2+}, Ca^{2+}, Sr^{2+}, Ba^{2+}, or Al^{3+}.

14. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The compound according to ~~any preceding claim~~ claim 13, wherein the electron donating moiety is a Lewis base.

15. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The compound according to claim 14, wherein the Lewis base is selected from the group consisting of ammonia; a primary, secondary or tertiary amine; a compound containing a hydroxy group; an ether; and water.

16. (Currently Amended) A method for ~~characterising~~ characterizing an analyte, which method comprises:

(a) providing a compound in which the analyte is attached by a cleavable linker to a reporter group relatable to the analyte, the linker having the following formula:



wherein RJ and R2 are ~~substituents as defined in any of claims 1, 2, 14, and 15~~ selected from the group consisting of a hydrogen atom, a halogen atom, a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl group, and a substituted or unsubstituted aryl group;

(b) cleaving, the reporter group from the analyte; and

(c) identifying the reporter group, thereby ~~characterising~~ characterizing the analyte.

17. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 16, wherein the reporter group is a mass marker identifiable by mass spectrometry.

18. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 17, wherein the mass marker is ~~as defined in any of claims 7-13~~ is selected from the group consisting of a polyether, a metal ion-binding moiety, and a metal ion, wherein the polyether is selected from the group consisting of a substituted, an unsubstituted poly(arylether) and one or more fluorine atom substituents, and wherein the metal ion-binding moiety is selected from the group consisting of a porphyrin, a crown ether, a hexahistidine, a multidentate ligand, a bidentate ligand, and EDTA, and wherein metal ion is a monovalent, divalent, or trivalent ion.

19. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to ~~any of claims 16-18~~ claim 18, wherein the analyte is a nucleic acid.

20. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 19, wherein the nucleic acid ~~is as defined in claim 3 or claim 4~~ is natural or is modified by modifying a base, sugar and/or backbone of the nucleotide or oligonucleotide.

21. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to ~~any of claims 16-20~~ claim 20, which method further comprises forming a compound as defined in ~~any of claims 1-17~~ claim 15, prior to identifying the reporter group.

22. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to ~~any of claims 18-23~~ claim 21, which method further comprises contacting the linker with an electron donating moiety to cleave off the reporter group.

23. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 22, wherein the electron donating moiety is ~~as defined in claim 14 or claim 15~~ a Lewis base selected from the group consisting of ammonia, a primary amine, a secondary amine, a tertiary amine, a compound containing a hydroxy group, an ether, and a water.

24. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to ~~any of claims 16-23~~ claim 23, wherein the reporter group is a mass marker and the method further comprises cleaving off the mass marker in a mass spectrometer.

25-30. (Cancel)

31. (New) A method according to claim 16, wherein R1 and R2 are further selected from the group consisting of fluorine, chlorine, bromine, iodine, methyl, ethyl, propyl, isopropyl, butyl, isobutyl, tert-butyl, or phenyl groups.

32. (New) A method according to claim 22, wherein the electron donating moiety is defined in claim 15.

33. (New) A method according to claim 32, wherein the reporter group is a mass marker and the method further comprises cleaving off the mass marker in a mass spectrometer.

34. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein the metal ion further comprises a transition metal ion, or a metal ion of group IA, IIA, or IIIA of the periodic table.

35. (New) The method of claim 34, wherein the metal ion further comprises Ni^{2+}, Li^{+}, Na^{+}, K^{+}, Mg^{2+}, Ca^{2+}, Sr^{2+}, Ba^{2+}, or Al^{3+}.